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ABSTRACT

This curriculum guide describes courses and provides some sample lesson plans for an English program for eighth and ninth grade students. All of the students are required to take a basic writing course for the first nine weeks of the semester. For the next nine weeks some students receive large group instruction in linguistics and the other students, who are in mini-group instruction, choose two themes to study. The same process is continued during the last nine weeks of the semester as a new group is moved into large group instruction. Among the many small group subject units that the student may choose to study are Mark Twain, Survival, "Romeo and Juliet," and "What Makes People Laugh." Sample lesson plans are provided for a lesson in recognizing the difference between fragments and sentences and for a lesson on Robert Frost's poem, "Out, Out..." The course objectives for large group instruction in transformational grammar are described. (DI)

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LARGE - SMALL or MINI GROUP INSTRUCTION IN ENGLISH

8th and 9th GRADES

PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
UPPER MARLBORO, MARYLAND

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CS 200452

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Eighth and ninth grade students in English (approximately 125-150 in each grade) are assigned to sections for accountability only. Teachers test all students and assign based on individual needs to Basics for Writing. All students take this course for the first nine weeks, (1-9).

For the next nine weeks approximately 60 - 75 students are in Large Group Instruction (Linguistics). The other students are in Small or Mini Group Instruction. These students choose two themes to study. Each theme is taught four and a half to 5 weeks (10-14), (15-18).

The same process continues as a new group is moved into the Large Group Instruction (19-27). The last nine weeks of Large Group Instruction is composed of students (45-125) who did not perform well in the Large Group (28-36).

8th Grade English Schedule

	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
1-9 Basics for Writing	Writings of Civil War Period - 15					Documents and Media of the Civil War - 15					Poetry and Music - 30					Humor - 15			Supreme Court Decisions - 15					Socio-Economic Problems of America - 30 (newspapers and current information)			
1-9 Basics for Writing	Large Group Instruction Linguistics - 60- 75										Large Group Instruction Linguistics - 65 - 75								Large Group Instruction Bottom ranked 45 of the 125								
1-9 Basics for Writing	Rise of the American Theater - 30					Public Speaking - 15					Poetry - 15				Musical America - 30				Creative Dramatics - 15					Communication Equals Life Part I-15			
1-9 Basics for Writing	Writings of America's Young People - 15					Survival - 30					Faces - 15				Poetry of Pop Music-15				Mark Twain: Man and his 30			The Writings		"The Lottery' in three forms 15			

Basics for Writing	1-9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
		Creative Writing and the Short Story - 15						Vocabulary Development - 15				Newspapers - 15				Racial Contribution to America - 15					"Romeo and Juliet" 15					Ballads of Today -15		
Basics for Writing	1-9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
		Literature of the South A sence of where you are 15						Poetry for those who hate it - 15			Under the Mushroom Cloud - 15					"Crucible"					"Romeo and Juliet"					Devil in Literature 15		
Basics for Writing	1-9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
		"Romeo and Juliet"						Communication Equals Life Part II - 15			Seven Ages of Man - 15					Hero to Anti-Hero 15				Approaches to Literature - 15						What makes People Laugh?- 15		
Basics for Writing	1-9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
		Science Fiction - 15						Composition and the Camera - 15			Three Parallel Novels - 15					Greek Mythology -15				"West Side Story" / "Romeo and Juliet" - 15						Literature in transition		
Basics for Writing	1-9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
		Large Group Instruction Linguistics - 60 - 75									Large Group Instruction Linguistics - 65 - 75									Large Group Instruction Bottom ranked 45 out of 125								

1-9 Basics for Writing	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
	Creative Writing and the short story - 15						Vocabulary Development 15				Newspapers - 15				Racial Contributions to America - 15				"Romeo and Juliet" - 15						Ballads of Today 15		
1-9 Basics for Writing	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
	Literature of the South A sense of where you are 15						Poetry for Those who Hate it-15			Under the Mushroom Cloud 15					"Crucible"				"Romeo and Juliet" -						Devil in Literature 15		
1-9 Basics for Writing	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
	Large Group Instruction Linguistics - 60 - 75									"Romeo and Juliet"					What Makes People Laugh 15				Large Group Instruction Bottom 45 of 125				Seven Ages of Man - 15				
1-9 Basics for Writing	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
	"Romeo and Juliet"						Composition and the Camera - 15			Large Group Instruction Linguistics - 65 - 75									Greek Mythology 15				Large Group Instruction Bottom 45 of 125				
1-9 Basics for Writing	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36
	"Fantastiks"						Poetry for the fun of it - 15			Focus on Youth - 15					Creative Writing 15				"Romeo and Juliet"				The Real Versus the Unreal 15				

Basics for Writing - 8th Grade

Sample Lesson Plan

Goal: To help the student recognize the difference between fragments and sentences, especially in their writing.

I. Teacher reads from a list that consists of fragments and sentences. The students are asked to distinguish between sentences and non-sentences. Non-sentences are orally converted into sentences. The term fragment is introduced.

II. Teacher shows a list of sentences and fragments on the overhead. When a fragment occurs, it is converted on the transparency into a sentence. Half of the list is done in this manner; the remaining sentences and fragments are done by the students on their own paper as instructed on the transparency which accompanies this lesson plan.
When students have been given enough time to complete the exercise, the exercise is discussed. The fragments that have been converted into sentences can be read aloud by the students or they might put them on the blackboard.

III. Students are asked to write between 5-10 sentences on one of the topics listed at the end of the second transparency.

Sample Lesson Plan - Small Group - 8th

Poetry - Weeks 19 - 23

This unit is approached from the basic premise that a poem is a total experience, an expression of a feeling or an insight -- an attempt to communicate on the part of a poet. We see this "experience" concept in vivid action in Frost's poem "Out, Out ...." (see insert). The students are made aware of the startling "experience" quality of the poem when they view it in relation to the news item which precedes it. This news item lists the facts of the incident which forms the framework of the poem. In the news item we recieve information -- fact upon fact. In the poem, we "feel" something -- for a moment we believe that we're there. We see the boy; we feel the flash of pain; we know his terror; we hear the pulse beat ever so slowly die away. Our senses are heightened -- WE experience an occurence. We do not simply learn about the facts that surround it.

Student participation and involvement is key in any material of this type. If they don't see the boy, if they don't hear the pulse, if they don't feel his anguish, then the "experience" quality of the poem is lost to them. I've found that the best way to approach the lesson has been to read the news item to them first, then have them quickly give back the facts. Random quick calling on people wakes them up and naturally at this age they all want to get into the act and relay what information they have learned. It works beautifully because they all feel totally secure that they know everything that there is to know about this boy and his accident.

Only with the reading of the poem does the realization that in actuality they knew very little hit them. They all instinctively sense the fact that the poetry gave them a "feeling," an "awareness," an "experience," that a factual news item could never give. They quite readily give you just the reply that you had been striving to get ---- the news item gives you information but the poem gives you so much more -- it gives you an experience.

From the realization point it is quite simple to lead the discussion into the "way" and "how" of the poem. A brief allusion to the fact that poems often appeal to the senses will quickly be picked up by the students and turned into an example-spiced re-reading of the poem stressing parts which appeal to sight, hearing, smell, etc. It turns into an out and out expose on sense experience in poetry! Once their interest is captured, children are capable of the freshest, most marvelous insights imaginable.

This poem is excellent material to use as a basis for discussion for many reasons. First it is about a young boy and about death --- both of which capture a young audience. Secondly -- the title itself lends itself to marvelous discussion possibilities. Most children in this age bracket have heard of Shakespeare but few have heard of MacBeth and a retelling of the story to elaborate upon the "out, out" title as having been taken from MacBeth's "Out, out brief candle" speech always manages to intrigue them. A discussion of life being snuffed out as quickly as the light on a candle is food for the imagination of the highest degree for a child of this age.

The joy of an approach such as this is that they use imagery, onamatopeia, metaphors glibly yet they never hamper these expressions with names. They never worry if a phrase forms an "image" or not --- They simply recognize and use them as a means of making words come alive.

My objectives in a unit of this type center around the appreciation of poetry. I want the students to come to terms with it in the light of its being a living, vital means of communication and not some stale old words in a dusty book. Poetry lives and this poem lives --- hence its inclusion in the unit of work.

Prose vs. Poetry

News item:

"William Jones, age 16, died last night in Montpelier Hospital after an unseccessful operation. He was an employee of John Harrison's farm in the township of Alton. While cutting wood on a buzz-saw yesterday in the late afternoon, Jones accidentally slipped and his left arm was almost amputated. Though a tourniquet was quickly applied as he was rushed to the hospital, he lost considerable blood. Surviving him is his sister, Mary, who is the cook on Mr. Harrison's farm."

Poem:

"Out, Out . . ."

The buzz-saw snarled and rattled in the yard

poem deleted due to copyright restrictions

Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.

——— Robert Frost

By the end of the year, each 8th and 9th grader will have spent 9 weeks in Large Group instruction, Transformational Grammar. At the end of this 9 week period, he has a working knowledge of the kernel sentence and of the kinds of structures that can occur within this basic sentence pattern. Moreover, he has spent a great deal of time successfully writing his own simple sentences. His basic information can be expressed in these formulas.

S = NP + VP

$$VP = \begin{bmatrix} Vi \\ Vt + NP \\ \begin{matrix} be \\ Vb \end{matrix} + NP \\ be \\ Vs + Adj \\ be + Advp \end{bmatrix}$$

NP = (det +) count noun
noncount noun
proper noun
personal pronoun
indefinite pronoun

VP = Aux + MV

Aux = tense (+ modal) (+ have + en) (+ be + ing)

MV = V (+ Adv)
Advp
Advm
Adv = Advt
Advf

Partial Listings of Small Groups Choices - 8th Grade

Weeks 10 - 14

The Writings About America's Young People - (15 students)

Students will be reading short works of literature written about and/or by young adults in America today. Included will be writings representative of America's minority groups. In addition, writing will be done by the students in the class which will be used in a literary booklet published by them.

Rise of the American Theatre - (30 students)

A study of American culture as exhibited by the theatre it has produced, this unit will include in depth studies of edited versions of four plays by American authors --- namely, Thornton Wilder's "Our Town", Herman Wouk's "The Caine Mutiny Court Martial", Edward Albee's "Sandbox", and Reginald Rose's "Thunder on Sycamore Street".

Excerpts from Writers of the Civil War Period - (15 students)

The students will read and evaluate material from the works of: Bruce Catton, Stephen Crane, Carl Sandburg, and Margaret Mitchell.

Weeks 15 - 18

Survival - (30 students)

Students will be reading short works of fiction and non-fiction representing man's effort to succeed in his struggle with and against man and his environment. Examples of works to be included are "To Build a Fire", "The Most Dangerous Game", "Flight", "The Wise and the Weak", and excerpts from such non-fiction works as The Diary of Anne Frank.

Public Speaking - (15 students)

The students will be trained in the proper methods of speech and debate. Writing and delivery, posture, presentation and material will be stressed. The unit will culminate with a pro- con debate on an issue of current interest to the students.

Weeks 19 - 23

Poetry - (15 students)

The "triple A" approach to poetry will be utilized in this unit. Basically, this approach is geared toward making the student more AWAKE to the wonders of life around him, more ALIVE to color and sound and feeling and more AWARE of the need to communicate. Students will benefit from the communications of men such as Langston Hughes, Rod McKuen and in turn will learn to communicate their own thoughts in poetic form.

Poetry and Music of Three Periods - (30 students)

Poetry and music of three periods will be compared. These periods are: The Civil War, World War II, and the Vietnam War.

Weeks 24 - 27

Humor - (15 students)

What makes it funny? ---- a comparison of the kinds of humor as seen in cartoons, caricatures, Thurber, O'Henry, Jean Kerr and Schultz.

The Poetry of Pop Music - (15 students)

Communication through the poetry in today's pop music will be discussed. Included will be lyrics from songs sung by such personalities as the Beatles, B. Dylan, A. Franklin, J. Baez, R. McKuen. In addition, students will be encouraged to communicate their own thoughts and feelings in a form similar to what they will be hearing.

Musical America - (30 students)

As with the drama, literary expression in music also reflects the times in which it flourishes. This unit will wend its lyrical way from the ballads of slavery and the Civil War, through the jazz age of the '20's, to the big band era of the '40's and the war songs that followed, to the rock and roll of the '50's, to the present day 'message' ballads and protest songs. The unit will end with an original "song of the times" composed by class members.

Weeks 28 - 32

Mark Twain: The Man and His Writings - (30 students)

Selections from material about and by Mark Twain will be read and discussed. Included will be excerpts from such works as Life on the Mississippi, Huckleberry Finn, Twain's Lectures, short stories, etc. The approach will be to show how time and place affect a man's writing and also to discover at the same time, the timelessness of one of America's favorite writers.

Interpreting What You Read - (15 students)

We will use Supreme Court decisions on school desegregation and Civil Rights.

Weeks 33 - 36

Communication = Life - Part I - (15 students)

This unit will delve into the why and how of the written word. Students will learn the basic steps involved in outlining, paragraph structuring and the proper approach to answering an essay question. Short stories by Poe, O'Henry, and Hawthorne will be used as literary background for the student's work.

"The Lottery" in Three Forms

This unit will consist of the translation of a single plot into three media: short story, drama and movie.

Partial Listings of Small Groups Choices - 9th Grade - Part A

Weeks 10 - 15 - (all groups limited to 15 students)

Reading the Short Story and Writing One

Students will read and study four or five different present day short stories. Some form of original short story will be written by each student.

"Romeo and Juliet"

This unit will explore Shakespeare, the man, his world, and the theatre which was his life. A detailed study of "Romeo and Juliet" will be made via textual reading, films and records. Stress will be placed on the poetry inherent in the language and the fact that this is a theatrical piece written for the stage.

Science Fiction

Students will be reading and discussing the contents and form of several science fiction short stories by such authors as Orwell, Clarke, Huxley, Bradbury, Tolkien, etc. In addition, short compositions of a science fiction nature will be written by the students. A trip to NASA is included in this course.

Literature of the South - A Sense of Where You Are

Follow the steps of southern times into the White House, within plantation mansions, into the slave quarters, over the prairies, across the battlefields, within small town squares and into the modern city. Included in this study will be selected works by Thomas Jefferson, Jesse Stuart, Willa Cather, Ellen Glasgow, Flannery O'Connor, and William Faulkner. A special study of the literature of Maryland will also be made.

Weeks 16 - 18

Poetry for Those Who Hate It

Celebrate Life! In this study of poetry life will be seen through eyes of Robert Frost, Emily Dickinson, Langston Hughes, Rod McKuen, John Donne, T.S. Eliot, William Wordsworth, and the most important eyes of all, "your own".

Composition and the Camera

Through the use of various audio-visual equipment such as cameras, video-tape machine, class-made filmstrips, tape recorders, etc., students will be capturing the world around them. In class these recorder sights and sounds will be the basis for the written response (as well as oral) of the other students in the class.

Communication = Life - Part II

The why and how of the written word will be covered in greater depth than in the 8th grade counterpart of this unit. In addition to a review and elaboration upon outlining, paragraph structuring and essay answering skills, the techniques of composition writing and proper critical thinking and evaluation will be presented and engendered in the students. Short stories by Hardy, Faulkner and Steinbeck will be used as points of departure for the critical thinking of the students.

Vocabulary Development

Work will be done on prefixes, suffixes, roots, and correct usage. Students will write short articles using types of vocabulary for news items, reviews, and advertising.

Weeks 19 - 23

Newspapers

Students will use 5 to 6 newspapers from across the country to compare the stress of the same news article. They will compare news, cartoons, editorials, and advertising.

Three Parallel Novels

Each student will read one of the three novels being used in the class. Background will be given on the novel as a form of fiction. Each of the novels will develop the common theme of the struggles of teenagers trying to find out just who they are and the part they will play in their lifetime. Included will be novels by Carson McCullers, John Knowles, and Herbert Hill.

Weeks 24 - 27

"The Crucible" and the Drama

A brief introduction of the drama and of theatrical conventions will preface an analysis of "The Crucible". This historical play based on the Salem Witchcraft trials will be studied by focusing on background, causes, human values, and comparisons with the McCarthy trials of the 1950's.

Racial Contributions to Our Culture

Students will study what the races have contributed in education, music, poetry, sports, art, theater and politics. Guest speakers will be used.

Weeks 28 - 33

"Romeo and Juliet"

This unit will develop the time of Shakespeare and the feeling for the language of "Romeo and Juliet" by use of films and a record of the play. Students will decide how they will dramatize sections: strolling players, use of puppets or modernization.

Approaches to Literature

The novel, A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith will be read and analyzed according to four basic critical approaches to literature: the biographical; the formalistic; the psychological and the historical. The student will be brought to an awareness of the role that the author's life plays in the novel; the style of writing involved; the thought processes of a young girl growing from childhood to young adulthood, and finally an appreciation of the times with which the novel deals.

"West Side Story"/"Romeo and Juliet"

The entire play of "West Side Story" will be read and discussed. In addition several excerpts from "Romeo and Juliet" will be included along with two short stories that develop a similar theme to the two plays. Included in this course will be the viewing of at least one movie of "Romeo and Juliet" along with either a movie or live performance of "West Side Story". In addition, background to Shakespeare's theater and the modern theater will be included.

"Romeo and Juliet"

Shakespeare's "star-crossed lovers" will be compared with the mismatched couple of the New York slums in "West Side Story". This unit will include a study of Shakespeare's life and times, his theatre, and his drama.

Weeks 34 - 36

Devil and Evil in Literature

Themes of horror and evil will pervade the gloomy atmosphere of this unit. Only the stout-hearted and unafraid should participate in this study of short works by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Melville, Benet, Poe and Hitchcock.

Literature in Transition

This unit consists of a discussion of a single piece of literature and its translation into other media: short story, TV, stage, movies.

Ballads of Today and Their Meanings

This unit will use ballads from the following sources with interpretations:
Simon and Garfunkle
Joan Baez
Bob Dylan
Rod McKuen
Bobbie Gentry

Partial Listings of Small Groups Choices - 9th Grade - Part B

(In Part B of the English Program, two teachers who were teaching small groups in Part A will share Large Group Instruction. To replace their units, the large group instructor from Part A will offer the following small groups.)

Weeks 10 - 15

"The Fantastiks"

Students will approach the study of drama and come to an understanding of it through the actual production of the long running American musical, "The Fantastiks".

Weeks 16 - 18

Poetry for the Fun of It

This course may be described as a glance at the works of some lesser poets and perhaps a few greater ones (if they suit our needs) whose main purpose was to move words and meanings around a page for the fun and/or funniness of it.

Weeks 19 - 23

Focus on Youth

The student will take a look at that in-between stage when one is young enough to have restrictions and old enough to resent them through the eyes of some sensitive men and women who thought enough about their life and hard times growing up to put them on paper. Some of the works to be examined in part or in toto are Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man by James Joyce, The Chosen by Chaim Potak, Portrait of the Artist as a Young Dog by Dylan Thomas, The Heart is a Lonely Hunter by Carson McCullers and Strait is the Gate by Andre Gide.

Weeks 24 - 27

Creative Writing

The student will attempt to capture 3 dimensional man on 2 dimensional paper with multi-dimensional words --- everybody including the teacher writes and everybody including the students criticize.

Weeks 18 - 31

"Romeo and Juliet"

The student will examine the structure of a tragedy and a comedy in order to comprehend the play as not merely a love story but a tragicomedy with particular emphasis on its comic aspects.

Weeks 32 - 36

The Real versus the Unreal

The student will examine the works of four contemporary writers who attempt to determine the real from the unreal in an age where each man views reality differently. Works to be used are "The Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot, "To Esme, with Love and Squalor", by J.D. Salinger, "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place" by Ernest Hemingway and The Roots of Heaven by Romain Gary.